

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

September 3, 2009
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Robinson, Eileen Rasnack, Berta Seltzer, Dwayne Dilley, Diana Thompson, Howard Katz, Bill Merriman, Jullie Gray, Bob Megargel, Heidi Ressler, Hannah Kimball

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Department of Parks and Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Walt Bowen, Washington State Senior Citizens Lobby; Kathy Iverson, Kirkland Senior Council; Dana LaRue, Kirkland Senior Council staff, Rich Allen, Kirkland Senior Council

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:36 a.m. by Chair Robinson who presided. All committee members were present with the exception of Mr. Katz who arrived at 8:43 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 6, 2009

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Seltzer. Second was by Ms. Ressler and the motion carried unanimously.

WASHINGTON STATE SENIOR LOBBY PRESENTATION

Community Services Supervisor Cathy VonWald introduced Walt Bowen with the Washington State Senior Lobby. Mr. Bowen said he had just completed his first year as president of the senior lobby, adding that he previously was employed for 30 years by the Department of Social and Health Services. He said when he began with DSHS, the state population was 3.5 million and there were 27,000 nursing home beds; since then the population has increased to 6.5 million and growing, but there are only 10,000 nursing home beds.

Mr. Bowen explained that the focus of the senior lobby is to enhance the quality of life of for seniors in Washington State through legislation and education. The lobby was formed in 1977 by a coalition of organizations interested in senior issues. Currently there are 26 organizations involved with focuses ranging from housing to aging services to elder law. The lobby meets monthly in Olympia, but while the legislature is in session the meetings are held twice per month. Each session includes at least one Senior Lobby Day; the long session in 2009 included two of the special focus days, with the second focused on budgets and revenues.

Mr. Bowen provided the Network members with copies of a document entitled *How to Understand the State Budget*. He said the policy of the legislature the last time around was to cut all programs equally in an attempt to be fair. During the next session they will be focusing on a supplemental to the biennial budget currently in effect.

The next Senior Lobby Day is scheduled for February 18, 2010. The 2010 session is slated for only 60 days so it will go fast. There will be no stimulus money, and less money overall, to deal with. Between 300 and 500 people are expected to participate in the lobby day.

Mr. Bowen said the lobby organizes and co-sponsors an annual fall conference which this year will be October 30 at the SeaTac Red Lion. The focus will be on health care. Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler will attend along with several legislators and the Governor. If there is a conclusion reached by then at the federal level, the discussion will center on how it will affect seniors in Washington State. If there is no health care plan by that date, the discussion will be on how the state will respond in the absence of a plan. The afternoon portion will focus on budget impacts, including the impacts should Initiative 1033 pass. The event will be covered by TVW, and those wanting to attend must register.

Mr. Bowen said Washington State Senior Lobby maintains an office in Olympia that is open Monday through Friday. The organization relies totally on contributions and is staffed entirely by volunteers. There are five board members, each of whom is a registered lobbyist. The organization has a webpage and sends out all of its notices by email.

All bills before the legislature which will in any way impact seniors are tracked by the organization. In addition, the volunteers work closely with the office of the Governor, the Attorney General, the Office of Veterans Affairs, the Insurance Commissioner, and any other office that deals with senior issues. The volunteers testify at hearings, craft letters to newspaper editors, and generally work to keep senior issues in the limelight, all in an effort to affect policy.

Mr. Bowen said the last legislative session charted new territory for many. Where traditionally legislators get elected on promises to address specific issues and use the funds available to address those causes, during the past session they found there was no money for any new program. Proposals for new programs that would cost money were dead on arrival. The legislators had to carefully review all government programs in order to determine what could be cut. While frustrating, the exercise was educational. The next session will present even fewer options and less money to work with, as well as less time in which to get their work done.

Senator Maria Cantwell has sponsored legislation nationally that would implement Project 2020. The program is aimed at accommodating aging in place and the encouraging of community-based services. The number of nursing home beds in the state of Washington has decreased steadily over the past 30 years precisely because the state has enacted changes that allowed for more community-based services that people have become comfortable with. Washington leads the nation in offering such services, and Project 2020 seeks to bring the nation up to the level of the state. When state legislators make cuts to programs such as adult day services, they are made to understand that doing so is a step backwards.

Chair Robinson commented that the socialized medicine approach Canada has in place includes provisions to pay for some level of in-home care, yet they have a high percentage of seniors being placed in nursing homes. She said she was curious to know why they have not been more successful in implementing aging in place.

Mr. Bowen reviewed the organization's website (<http://www.waseniorlobby.org/>) with the Network and highlighted the links it includes. He noted that the information is updated daily and everything gets archived. Anyone wanting email alerts and hearing notices can sign up for them on the website.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Dilley, Mr. Bowen said the organization defines seniors as age 55 and up, and clarified that one need not be a senior to volunteer with the organization.

Mr. Katz asked if the organization focuses on the legislative issues of county government. Ms. VonWald said Aging and Disability Services follows all of the national, state, county and local legislative issues. They have a lobbyist of their own.

Ms. VonWald reminded the Network members that the joint committee with the Kirkland Senior Council has been working with Mr. Bowen to establish a legislative meet and greet for the Bellevue and Kirkland legislators. The event will occur at Kirkland Heritage Hall on Monday, November 9 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., which is prior to the legislative session but after the state senior lobby conference.

Mr. Bowen said one of the things the legislators need to hear is that home and community-based services work and that they save the state a lot of money.

Ms. Thompson asked what the best place is to find material to be used as a base for writing the legislators about the advantages of community-based home care. Mr. Bowen said the Washington Senior Lobby webpage includes a link that connects to the email addresses of every legislator. The website also includes a great deal of information that bolsters the arguments in favor of community-based home care.

Chair Robinson asked what it would take to get the legislature to form a long-term care committee. Mr. Bowen said efforts are under way to that end. He allowed that the Network on Aging could provide assistance by keeping the issue in the forefront in all conversations and communications with legislators. Several standing committees have found that absent funding they are not able to do anything at all. The lobby is pushing the idea of establishing a long-term care committee when the legislature acts following the elections to rearrange the various committees.

Mr. Bowen advocated in favor of working with the political parties to get them to recruit candidates who are capable of thinking, who have intellect and compassion, and who are willing to do their homework and work diligently on finding practical solutions.

BREAK

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING MAINTENANCE

PR/Outreach: Update, Plans for Future Outreach

Ms. Ressler reported on her attendance at the Blueberry Festival/Open House event. She said the event was held at an elementary school and the focus was primarily on early childhood and elementary school education. The groups in attendance were focused on the youth. She said she did not stay for the entire event but did leave behind materials which the city staff later reported was all picked up by those who attended.

Ms. VonWald said she met with success with getting the Farmer's Market and the Shape Up Campaign information in the Senior Information and Assistance newsletter. Also, the last

edition of *Neighborhood News* included an article offering talks in the neighborhoods by the Network on Aging.

Ms. VonWald said a date for meeting with the Mercer Island Senior Council has not yet been set but the matter remains on her radar.

Chair Robinson noted that the Network worked very hard to establish a good rapport with Overlake Senior Care when Debbie Anderson was the head of it. She said in return for co-sponsoring the Home Sweet Home Fair at City Hall the Network was able to advertise the services it provides for seniors. This year, the Senior Housing Fair and the Home Sweet Home Fair will be combined into a single senior resource fair at Westminster Chapel in October, and the Network has been having difficulty getting involved in it since Ms. Anderson is no longer at the helm; the Network has been offered the opportunity to have a table at the event for a cost of \$300. The new people clearly do not know the Network and reaching out to them with information about what the Network does would be in order.

Ms. VonWald agreed that making a presentation to Overlake would be a good idea but suggested that more importantly someone should ask the person now in charge about the Network being allowed to have a table at the fair at no charge.

There was general agreement that Overlake should be invited to attend a Network meeting, possibly a special meeting.

Regional Partnerships

Ms. Thompson said she met with the group from Kirkland. It was decided that Rich will develop a save the date to be sent to legislators and submit it to Ms. VonWald by the end of the afternoon so that both groups can review it and ultimately send out the same information.

Legislative Issues

Ms. VonWald noted that long-term senior care will be one of the topics discussed on November 9 in Kirkland. She also informed the group that she would be attending the next Eastside Human Services Forum meeting to talk about the legislative priorities and to make sure a senior focus is included.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Advocacy/Housing & Mobility

Mr. Dilley said the committee is moving forward with several ideas, one of which ties back to the meeting with Arthur Sullivan from ARCH and promoting the concepts of universal design. He reminded the group that universal design involves home construction practices that anticipate aging in place and the notion of visit ability. The committee is interested in seeing local policymakers have a presentation on universal design.

Mr. Dilley said the committee is also focused on developing a one-stop list of Eastside housing. Ms. Rasnack said she spoke with former Network on Aging member Eve Stern with Snap for Seniors, which has a list of units limited to assisted care, to see if the organization would consider expanding the list to include independent housing and market-rate housing. She said Ms. Stern indicated that in the fall the organization is intending to do just that.

Mr. Megargel asked if it would be worthwhile approaching representatives of the real estate agents community to see if they would be interested in indicating accessibility when

advertising homes for sale or rent. Ms. VonWald agreed that that would be a good thing for them to include, especially as accessibility and universal design becomes better known. She said if a presentation is put together for policymakers, the Master Builders organization and realtors should be included on the invitation list.

Chair Robinson reported that Councilmember Lee approached her about six months ago and highlighted the fact that Bellevue is lacking volunteer transportation for seniors. He called attention to the ITN American program, a cooperative rideshare program, and asked if it might be something that could be scaled to fit Bellevue. A meeting was set up with the transportation coordinator at Hopelink and one of the founders of the FlexCar program, Tracy Carroll. Mr. Carroll was very excited about the possibilities and brought up some rideshare ideas from the East Coast. The pros and cons of the various programs were discussed in light of what might work for seniors in Bellevue. The next step will be a facilitated focus group, probably at the North Bellevue Community Center.

Education/Safety & Support

Ms. Ressler said the committee at its last meeting had as its focus the upcoming senior day at the market. There are eight confirmed tabled so far and another four pending. A demonstration or performance has been arranged for each hour for entertainment purposes. A couple more volunteers are needed the day of the event. A survey will be incorporated to find out how people found out about the event, if they liked the mix of vendors, and if they would be willing to attend similar events.

STAFF REPORT

Recession Response Planning

Ms. VonWald said the Bellevue Cares website includes information on where to find help and how to give help.

Ms. VonWald provided the Network members with large yellow tags to be worn when attending community meetings and forums. She said they are intended to advertise the Network at those meetings.

Ms. VonWald said the nominating committee met recently to discuss recruitment. She said the information went out in the *Bellevue Reporter* and is listed on the city website. Applications are due October 2. Interviews will be conducted in October and by the November 5 meeting there will be a recommendation from the nominating committee.

The Network was reminded that the Shape Up campaign is underway at the North Bellevue Community Center. A grant from the King County Emergency Medical Services has made it possible to offer ten dollars off the cost, and everyone who signs up gets a goodie bag that includes the Vial of Life and a water bottle.

With regard to the minutes, Ms. VonWald noted that they are emailed to all members and asked if she also needs to be printing them out for distribution at the meetings. It was agreed that the members should print out the emailed version if they want a hard copy.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS – None

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. VonWald reviewed the upcoming agenda items and reminded the Network that the next meeting would be on October 8 rather than October 1.

ADJOURN

Chair Robinson adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.